



Butte
Environmental
Council



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Activities and Events

Environmental Education
Recycling Referrals
Environmental Advocacy
Endangered Species Faire
Bidwell Park Cleanups
Chico Area Creek Cleanups
Wetlands Preservation
Groundwater Protection

Board of Directors

Lynn Barris
Nora Burnham
Armeda Ferrini
Jim Gregg
Chuck Lundgren
Heather Schlaff

Executive Director

Barbara Vlamis

Staff

Maggi Barry
Mary Muchowski
Nikki Schlaishunt

March 20, 2009

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
Sacramento Office
11020 Sun Center Drive #200
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-6114

Subject: Support for the Rubicon Trail Cleanup and Abatement Order

Dear Water Quality Control Board,

On behalf of the Butte Environmental Council, representing 850 members, I am writing to express our support for the draft Cleanup and Abatement Order issued on January 23, 2009 by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board to the Eldorado County Department of Transportation. We are concerned about the destructive and unchecked off-road vehicle use resulting in ongoing resource damage on the Rubicon Trail, and the potential negative impact on surrounding national lands. The Board must act to stop increased erosion, soil compaction, and damage to plants and animals. We support the Regional Board's effort to prevent this situation from worsening even further and believe that such actions are long overdue.

BEC supports the adoption of the Order and asks that its adoption be complemented by closure of the Rubicon Trail until such time as a full environmental review can be conducted and appropriate measures are taken to minimize impacts from future motorized use of the trail, if such use must occur. At the very least, the trail should be closed to all wet season use and any ongoing use should be limited to street legal vehicles in order to minimize erosion and subsequent waterway sedimentation. These important interim measures will have immediate and noticeable benefits to the ecosystem and the water quality.

Off-road groups argue that they can police themselves and that a formal order is unnecessary because the environmental impacts of off-road vehicles can be mitigated by volunteer efforts. While volunteer efforts to clean up trash are appreciated, they are not enough. The issues of soil erosion and water quality are so large and complex, it is unlikely that volunteers would have the knowledge, skill, tools, or necessary coordination to adequately protect the environment. Furthermore, self-policing and volunteer efforts have proven largely ineffective in preventing environmental damage and illegal behavior.

BEC commends the Regional Board and staff for your excellent assessment of the impacts on the Rubicon from off-road vehicle use and initiating the process needed to stop this damage from continuing. We also applaud you for finally taking action—action that is long overdue—and ask that the draft Cleanup and Abatement Order be formally adopted.

Sincerely,

Barbara Vlamis, Executive Director

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